

October/November 2007 Winterport Recreation Department Report

October 6th through November 16th

Board News –

The Recreation Board held our October meeting on 10/17 and our November meeting on 11/14. The October meeting focused primarily on finalizing preparations for the youth basketball season and hearing from Zach Hardy on a potential Eagle Scout project to build new dugouts on the softball field at Abbott Park. The November meeting heard from 1 parent concerning how the Recreation Department sets and enforces policies; specifically policies allowing kids to “play up” in programs. (Play up refers to the practice of a child playing in a division above their current grade or age.) In November we also heard from a parent interested in starting a cross country ski program. Research and planning elements of this program are under way. In our December meeting we'll know for sure if this will be a new offering in January or not.

Sponsored Programs –

Youth Soccer Youth soccer is officially closed now. Revenue from registration fees was right on the mark and expenses were well within budgeted amounts. This season was likely one of the best on record.

Youth Basketball Youth basketball is officially up and running at all ages and divisions. It was a little bit of a rocky start, but things have leveled out now and are progressing nicely.

Recreation Coordinator's Report –

Our soccer program finished with a flurry. It was very evident that all kids involved had a great time with this program. Our volunteer coaches deserve most of the credit in our program as they took the ball running and made their practices and games fun and a learning experience for all involved. Winterport's Pre Kindergarten/Kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grade age groups had excellent coaches and tried something new this year by playing scrimmages with both Frankfort and Stockton Spring teams of the same age level. This was a great experience for the kids from all the towns. The 3rd thru 5th grade league administrators decided to make our end of season a round-robin type of event where the lower seeded teams played each other and the higher seeded teams did likewise. This proved very satisfying in that all the games during the tourney were close games and nobody had the pressure of worrying about a final winner. This was a grade “A” decision by the administrators.

Where Soccer ran smoothly with no rough spots, basketball has started out pretty rough. This year the Recreation Board decided to send out a questionnaire with the basketball registration forms. Most everyone parents and children answered the questions as we were hoping. The whole idea behind the questionnaire was to find out if what the Recreation Board has done in the past is working and if parents and players are happy with our program. Leading up to the questionnaire there has been controversy in how we divided kids within the 5th and 6th grade division (10-12 year olds) to make more than one team. There are advocates for splitting up players by skill level. Where the higher skilled players would comprise a team that would enter a more competitive league. The other players of lesser skill levels would play in the less competitive Recreation League. On the other side are the advocates for splitting the kids up evenly skill level wise making two even teams, deciding what league to enter them in after making the teams. This way the kids are not being labeled at such an early age in our recreation program. Both sides of the picture have their merits. On one side, higher skilled players play with kids at the same skill level and against higher competition levels. And on the other, kids have the advantage of playing with all skill levels and gain from their peers while they are learning to play the game. The latter side also has the argument that what is a true recreation program; Are all supposed to be treated equal in what is offered? Or should they be split so that the higher skill level have better competition so that they can achieve more in the program? Within the questionnaire the question was asked, the recreation board wanted to know what the parents desired or felt was right or wrong. The results came back, give or take a few responses, pretty even. So the board decided to vote amongst themselves in how we would pursue the program this year. They decided to split the players by age and put the 6th graders in the more competitive league and the 5th graders in the lesser competitive recreation league.

The Recreation Board has had in the past a policy in which if a child showed promise or special skills in basketball in that he/she showed a higher level of play could, under recommendation or agreement of the recreation board, move up and play in the next division level. This year we have two children in the 4th grade that has taken that step and moved

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up into the 5th/6th grade division of our program. It is a policy in which there has been little or no complaints. Questions or complaints that have arisen are why does a younger age child get to play up and take playing time away from players in the upper level of play. What will happen when there are try-outs for the upper age travel team? Will they be allowed to try-out and take a position away from the older players? If they are not allowed to try-out, will they be allowed to try-out for the younger age division and take a spot away from a player that has been playing in this division all season? All these questions are valid and need thought through.

This year participation numbers are low. Normally we have 20+ players in each of our divisions and can field two teams in all our age brackets. The past three years we have had low numbers and fielding two teams has been difficult.

As the Recreation Coordinator I have one recommendation for the Recreation Departments Board. They should make hard policies in which there is no discussion or wavering in how our programs are going to be run from one year to the next. Decide what is the mission statement of the Recreation Department. Do we try and make it so all get the best possible chances? Or do we run programs where all kids are treated equal; where all participants play with their peers of same age by training our volunteers and teaching our children in the best methods possible assuring a fun atmosphere?

Recreation Coordinator - Dave Lester

Upcoming Events -

In the next couple of months the Recreation Board will be running the youth basketball season, working with the Town to prepare the ice rink for another winter of skating, planning the 2nd Annual Sledding and Skating Party at the Park, and closing in on finalizing our formal policies and procedures document. Our December meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 12/19 at 6:00pm in the Victoria Grant Civic Center.